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SOURCE Rybnoye Khozyaystvo, No 11, 1947.DEVELOPMENT OF SOVIET FISHING TECHNIQUE

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The development of the Soviet fishing industry has taken place in two basic directions: (1) the exploitation of new products and fishing areas, and (2) the perfection of techniques in areas fished in the past. Particular attention has been devoted to the creation of a strong northern and far eastern maritime fishing industry. The rich material bases of these basins, scarcely touched before the revolution, have afforded not only a greater total catch for the country but a proper distribution of capital investment.

In place of the few obsolete trawlers inherited from Tsarist Russia, a powerful Soviet trawling fleet, made up of the most modern, domestically built ships, has been created on the Barents Sea. For number of fish caught per crew member, the trawling fleet stands first among all other types of fishing. The yearly average catch per crew member (including command personnel and engineers) in 1,500 centners on the better trawlers. In comparison with the prerevolutionary level of catch in the Barents Sea, this is a 35-fold increase. The hourly trawling take has about doubled. In annual catch per trawler the Soviet trawling fleet is first in the world. Stakhanovite trawlers each take over 60,000 centners of fish per year.

The Soviet trawl is superior in capacity and ease of handling to any known foreign trawl.

Along with the heavy trawlers, smaller motor boats such as the combines (kombayny) and the "insatki" were built for use in littoral fishing. Using these boats, Soviet fishermen have revived the practice of catching benthic fish with "mutniki," incorrectly called Danish seines or dragnets (snyurreboda).

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An immediate task facing the industry is the development of a commercial herring catch in the Barents Sea. The Arctic Scientific Research Institute of the Fish Economy has discovered the schooling grounds of masses of large and fatty herring of the "Polar zalom" species. This discovery is one of great scientific and practical significance, prefacing the development of a large herring catch in the near future.

Prerevolutionary fishing in the Far East was based almost exclusively on salmon, fish of this species accounting for 90 percent of the annual catch. This was conditioned by the passive nature of the fishing methods. With the establishment of Soviet rule in the Far East, the fishing industry there began exploiting such other valuable fish as herring and Pacific sardines. The total catch in far eastern waters in 1939, compared with that in 1913, was up 62 percent. Herring and sardine accounted for 45 percent of this 1939 catch, which in prerevolutionary days the proportion of herring was only 7.5 percent. The Pacific sardine was entirely unexploited.

At first sardines were caught from small boats with fill nets. This method of fishing required a great number of special "detachers" to get the fish out of the nets, and resulted in low-quality catches. To avoid these difficulties, bags and fixed seines were successfully introduced. A large motor fleet was built and new equipment designed to service the seines. Stakhanovite sardine bag fishermen have obtained brilliant results with these new techniques, the best catches now running around 15,000 centners annually. The fixed seines have proved even more productive. An entirely original one has been designed which can be set in extremely deep water.

There have been great advances in the nonfish marine products industry of the Far East, particularly in crabs and sea mammals. The proportion of these in the total far eastern take has increased 4-fold since prerevolutionary times. The building of the crabbing flotilla and the "Aleut" whaling mother-ships, which are really huge floating plants equipped with the latest processing facilities, is one graphic example of the tremendous transformation our fishing industry has undergone during the Stalin five-year plans.

Fishing in the Caspian Sea has likewise been totally transformed since the revolution. Floating nets, pair-trawling (uliznetsovyy lov), fixed seines, and alamans have come into wide use.

Particularly significant has been the development of fixed seine fishing in the northern Caspian. In 1934 there were nine fixed seines in that area. This number increased to 27 in 1936, 238 in 1938, and 787 in 1939. The proportion of the total catch represented by fixed seine taken in the Astrakhan fishing area grew from 0.2 percent in 1936 to 44 - 45 percent in 1939 - 1940, while in the same period the proportion of the catch taken by sea net fishing fell from 78 percent to 45 - 24 percent. This redistribution of the catch has incurred a sharp increase in the productivity of fishing labor. The annual take per fishermen working on fixed seines is 124.5 centners, while on other forms of netting the take is only 74.2 centners.

The motorization of collective fishery fleets which is being accomplished with the help of motor fishing stations has made possible expedition-type fishing. The southern Caspian herring expedition, which is constantly in operation, accounts for 6 percent of the entire Caspian herring take, and is manned by only 3 percent of the Caspian fishing personnel. This expedition plays an extremely important role in mitigating the seasonal fluctuations in Caspian fishing. The herring catches are distinguished by high food value, and are of a size not taken in coastal waters.

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The technical re-equipment of the fishing industry is clearly evident in the mechanization of sweep-seine fishing. No other fishing industry in the world has such a sufficiency of mechanized hauling equipment as has been achieved in the Caspian Sea. Soviet fishermen were the first in the world to mechanize the hauling of outrigger nets, and to practice automatic casting of seines. The entirely new idea of using self-setting seiners (samometnyy nevodnik) has not only lightened the work of the fishermen, but improved the quality of casting and enlarged the fished area.

One can appreciate the significance of the Soviet reconstruction of the Caspian Sea Fish industry when it is realized that to catch the same number of fish today as in prerevolutionary times requires only one half the number of fishermen.

The small-scale hand-fishing industry of the Anov-Black Sea Basin has become a flourishing trade under Soviet rule. The motor fleet of fishing boats, totaling 30,000 horsepower in 1940, has completely transformed the character of the work. Expedition fishing is very important in this region. In 1938 the take by expeditions was 14 percent of the entire year's catch. The technique of coastal fishing has likewise changed radically. Fixed seines account for 50 percent of the annual catch. Of the pelagic fish exploited in the Black Sea the pelamyd (young tunny) is the most important.

The accumulated organizational and technical experience gained over the years brought the industry through the difficult years of the war. The temporary occupation by the enemy of a number of fishing basins, and partial destruction of their material and technical base by the Russian people was met with such thorough reorganization of the industry that the entire catch fell only 10 percent below the prewar level. The war has permitted us to know our strengths and potentialities better. It may be said that the labor productivity in the principal basins during the war not only did not fall off but exceeded the prewar level 5.5 percent (excluding Siberia), while on the collective fisheries it increased 27 percent (as of 1944).

The fishing industry is now rapidly recovering from the wounds of war. Facing the industry is the tremendous job of attaining the Five-Year Plan goal of 22 million centners of fish in 1950.

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